

A

REVIEW

OF THE

Affairs of *FRANCE*:

With Observations on TRANSACTIONS at Home.

Saturday, December 15. 1705.

IN some late Reviews I have been upon the Union of the Church, and exploding the pretended Necessity the Church had upon them, either in the late Times, or Now, to make use of the Civil Power, and by that Authority to impose indifferent things as Terms of Communion upon those who could not in Conscience comply with them.

I cannot but note here; That if the Necessity will be hard to prove; the next step will be yet more difficult; and that is, *The Reasonableness*; and lastly, *The Expedience* of it. We say many things are Lawful, that are not convenient; but nothing can be Lawful, that is not Reasonable.

I remember that in the unhappy Times when *Dissenters* were persecuted by the preposterous Maxims of the Court, and the Church made a Tool to act a part for the State, and with an Unchristian, as well as

inconsistent Zeal, first drive Men to the Sacrament; and then refuse it them, unless they comply'd with the Ceremony of Kneeling. As these things caused a great many unhappy, and, I may say, dreadful Sacraments in *England*, where Men were, contrary to the express Canon of the Church, driven to the Table, under all manner of open and scandalous Unfitness, to the Scandal of the Christian Religion, and the Great Dishonour of the Church of *England*; Things I presume, your Lordships cannot reflect on without Horrour. Having occasion to go *Windsor* with a certain Gentleman, with whom I had some Contest about the Posture of Receiving, and the Coercions then in Fashion; It chanc'd that we went together into the Chappel-Royal, or *St. George's Chappel*, and viewing the fine Painting, I was surpriz'd to find that at the same time that the Government

persecuted the *Dissenters* for not receiving the Sacrament kneeling, on the Altar-piece of the Chappel, was represented our Saviour administering his first Supper, and his Disciples all sitting round the Table.

I confess it occur'd to my mind that it was strange, with what Face a Government could persecute the Subject for refusing to receive in a Posture, which at the same time they acknowledg'd thus publicly, our Saviour himself did not Practise at the first Institution; and showing it my Friend, it struck him dumb as to his Argument, and astonished him—I know the Posture is disputed; but all allow it to be that Posture which suited best with their common Repasts, suited to a Feast or Fellowship, and therefore call'd a Communion. But, my Lords, the Reasonableness of imposing these indifferent things, as Terms of Communion, will absolutely sink and die by these Inconsistencies in their Circumstances; and the Reasonableness being taken away, I think the Necessity will soon follow: For, if it cannot be prov'd to be reasonable, it will be very difficult to make out the Necessity.

But I cannot end it here; I am now a most humble Petitioner to all our Brethren of the Church, that the Necessity and Reasonableness of these things being examin'd, they would be pleas'd to proceed with the same Impartiality and Seriousness to enquire into the *EXPEDIENCE* of it; and this with respect both to Persons and Times.

I need not explain here the Difference between the Circumstances of the present time, and the Year 1662. I believe the Reverend and Learned Divines of the Church, or at least many of them, have Plainness of Principle enough to own the Inexpedience of the former Juncture has sufficiently been made appear, in the manifest unhappy Consequences of it seen since in the terrible Rents, Chasms and Incisions it has made in the Christian Unity of the Church.

If it is so easy to prove that it was Inexpedient *then*, it is much more easy to prove it Inexpedient *now*.

We are now determin'd, and 'tis happy for England *that we are so*, that Moderation is the only Safety of the Church; And what has work'd this strong Conviction on the Minds of the whole Nation, but the Experience of the sad Havock these Unchristian Politicks of Coertions, Exclusive Laws, and Occasional Bills have made, both in the Church and whole Nation.

It would be needless to fill this Paper with the Melancholly History of the Dilapidations and Invasions made upon another here in a Nation of Christians. No Man would think, and Foreigners are amaz'd, when they hear, how a Protestant Nation, not long before violently persecuted themselves; and by reason of that Persecution, by force rending themselves from the *Roman Church*, and having establish'd a Reformation both in Doctrine and Practice, should not among the rest of the zealous Rootings up of Error, have root'd out that Canker of Religion, *PERSECUTION*. The Fury these Reformers turn'd with upon their Brethren, only because they were for making that Reformation more compleat, is wonderful and unaccountable; and was such, That had it been told to King *Edward the Sixth*, the Pious Founder of the *English Church*; he would have Reply'd with the *Assyrian Capt.* to the Prophet, *Is thy Servant a Dog, that he should do these things?*

The Imprisonments, the Fines, the Excommunications, the Plunderings, the Indignities, Revilings, Silencing, Banishing, and putting to Death of *Dissenters* in England, only for not complying with things acknowledg'd indifferent, have been such, That no Nation in the World can parallel; and were the Black History to be entred into, it would find no Example of any thing like it:

I shall not enter into the sad Particulars; I am still pursuing the Peace I beg for, by avoiding flying in the Face of our Aragonists with their worst Crimes; and therefore I bury the Particulars with the unhappy Actors, only with this General Remark, That of all the Persecutions that ever were
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for Religion, ever since the Christian Religion set footing in the World, none ever equal'd this in *England*, for the following Circumstances.

1. None was ever carried on by such Clandestine and Irregular Methods.

2. None was ever begun upon such trifling Occasions, and for such Minute Differences between the persecuted and the Persecutors.

Persecution between Heathen and Christian, *Asbanasian* and *Arrian*, Papist and Protestant, had some Pretence; they were opposite in Principle, stood upon different Foundations, and the Safety of one, was inconsistent with the Safety, or at least with the Prosperity of the other; but for Protestants to Persecute one another, Brethren in one and the same Faith, built on one and the same Foundation, both Religious and Civil, of whom it must be said, that one cannot fall without the other; and this while Potent Enemies Assault them both; this is the most Preposterous and Unaccountable thing in the World, and the Church of *England* Represented in our Reverend Assembly of our Convocation, has nothing before her, but by some Solemn Act, to convince the World of what on all occasions I have Declar'd, and which is most certainly the Fact; that this was not the Genuine Act of the Church of *England* as a Church; but as she was Corrupted, Influenc'd, and made a Tool of the Court; whose Projects being, as since they have appear'd, bent to Destroy, not Liberty only but Religion; found no way so proper, as to draw the Church into this Ridiculous and inconsistent piece of Management, contrary to her own Doctrines and Principles; contrary to Reason and *English* Liberty, and contrary to the Principles of the Christian Religion in general.

That this is the same Party, who, tho' Suppress'd by the Revolution, yet not quite Extinct, are still pushing at the same thing, and striving to bring the Church of *England*, into the same Extravagancies and Follies; that the same Artifices have been made use of, and the same

Engines at work, I refer to *Occasional Bills*, *Dangerous Experiments* and the like, which our Bishops have suffer'd the Persecution of their Tongues; for, having more Religion, as well as Charity in them than to Comply with.

I shall say no more as to the particular, but Exercise the same Charity I commend, in Concealing these things; only give some Account of the Charity of the *Dissenters* to the Church, in not Exposing them for these Follies, and the Unsuitable Return they daily receive.

In the Reign of the Late King *James*, May it Please our Reverend Clergy to reflect, the design of the Court appearing barefac'd to that Popery, which it had for 30 Years before been under-hand Contriving; the Politicians of that Age, who knew well enough what *Dupes* they had made of the Clergy in the former Reign, and how they had brought them in, to Persecute in a most Barbarous manner, five times in about twenty five Years, their Brethren the *Dissenters*; that they might exactly Mimick their Master, and act the True Devil; first to Tempt, and then Accuse; began to Expose the Church for it, and the Court openly took part with the *Dissenters*, Granted them an Illegal Arbitrary Tolleration, and daily Cajoll'd them, with retorting upon the Church, the Barbarities these had suffer'd.

It happen'd, that a Dissenting Minister, not unknown to many of our Reverend Clergy of the Church, and yet Living, had taken Minutes of the Sufferings of the *Dissenters*, and Depredations of the Court, for I will no more call it the Church, upon them; he had Lists of their Ministers and others in Prisons, and of those that Dy'd and were Starv'd there; of the Fines levied by Executions on their Estates, and a Melancholy History it would be made.

Pray, Gentlemen of the Church, be pleas'd to Remark this; the *Dissenters* are but Men, and made of the same Flesh and Blood, subject to like Passions with their Brethren; and the Regret of their former Treatment might be expected, an Infallible handle, to draw them in to Expose
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the Church, and lay the Matter before the World; especially considering the Truth of Fact of Recent Memory, and Thousands of Witnesses ready to Attest, besides the Guilt in the Adverse Party, ready to join with the Accusation, and impose Silence upon the Persons.

Now I am to suppose this Gentleman sent to by the Government, Entreated by the Party, and at last, Tempted by a Large Reward, to make this Publick, for so they were, and to Expose the Church by it; for they knew that a Charge of Persecution would Expose any Church, much less upon such Trivial Grounds as they had.

Now would our Brethren consider, with what Injustice are the *Dissenters* Tax'd with Designs against the Church? Did this Gentleman take the Advantage: Or was he Tender of the Church? even so much as of her Reputation; I boast for him, tho' he is absolutely a Stranger to me, and knows not of this Paper; I say I boast for him and for the *Dissenters*, in him: he Scorn'd the Temptation, he refus'd the Entreaters, Rejected the Rewards, and told them, he would not so far Assist them to Pull Down the Church of England, or to that Effect; in short, he refus'd, either to Publish his *Memorandum*, or so much as to show them the Collection he had made, or to give them the least Opportunity to do it for themselves; and this purely, as he foresaw the real Design of the Party to Pull Down the Church, which he as a *Fellow Protestant*, as well as a *Dissenter*, had more Sence, Honour, and Christianity than to join in.

I need not Appeal, to Mr. *Jeremy White* for the Truth of this; I hope I have not wrong'd him in the Particulars; if I have, on his Notice I'll do him Right; but I Appeal for the Truth of it, to those most Reverend Members of your Assembly, who with others lately Dead, gave Mr. *White*

Publick Thanks, for this his Christian and Unexampled Moderation, and promised to Remember it, whenever they should have opportunity, to make Returns of the like Charity to the *Dissenters*.

Now, Gentlemen of the Church, is the Time for returns of Charity; and I make no Doubt, your Members will do your Parts; as for those Gentlemen, who are yet for Insinuating, that the *Dissenters* are Dangerous to the Church; I refer them to this Example, and let them show us a like Instance of their Moderation if they can.

I doubt not, but these things have had their due weight with that part of the Nation, that have given so Glorious a Testimony, to the Safety of the Church——Can the Church be in Danger from Men, Who when they could have Injur'd Her, would not. Preposterous Jealousies! for shame Gentlemen, let's have no more of this Ridiculous Stuff brought upon the Stage.

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